

Subj: **1792 small cent without plug**
Date: 09/01/2004 9:53:45 AM Central Daylight Time
From: [EricNumis](#)
To: gaspar@wuchem.wustl.edu

Dear Peter:

If you write anything to anyone I believe you should point out that the slabbed piece can be broken out of the slab and tested and then reslabbed without harm.

The December 18, 1792 from Jefferson to Washington reads as follows:

Th: Jefferson has the honor to send the President two cents made on Voight's plan by putting a silver plug worth $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cent into a copper worth $\frac{1}{4}$ cent.

Mr. Rittenhouse is about to make a few by mixing the same plug by fusion with the same quantity of copper. He will then make of copper alone of the same size, etc. lastly he will make the real cent as ordered by Congress, 4 times as big.

Specimens of these several ways of making the cent may now be delivered to the Committee of Congress now having the subject before them.

I hope this helps.

Eric

Subj: **Re: 1792 "fusible alloy" (no plug) cent**
 Date: 09/06/2004 2:00:48 PM Central Daylight Time
 From: gaspar@wuchem.wustl.edu
 To: EricNumis@aol.com

Wayne:

More on my previous message. Touching ones keyboard before consulting Walter Breen's writings is always dangerous, and this time was no exception. In his encyclopedia of US coins, Breen quotes the Jefferson 12/18/1792 letter and goes on to list the three varieties: #1369 Silver center cent, Judd 1, about 12 known, pedigrees for 11 specimens given, plus two perforated blanks found by Frank Stewart at a Philadelphia mint site in 1909. The weight of one silver center cent (Garrett 2347) is given as 70.5 grains = 4.57 grams.

Breen #1370 is a 1792 cent from the same dies, billon, no silver plug, 2 known(?), 2 supposedly authenticated by chemical test, one ex-Harmer Rooke 11/69, the other in Bowers Review, pp. 18-20(1973-4) and Coin World, 12/4/74, p. 24, 1975 Suburban Washington Convention Sale, lot 59. A weight is given for a specimen in the ANA collection, 78.2 grains = 4.549 grams, but this must be a typo since 78.2 grains = 5.067 grams and 4.549 grams = 70.2 grains.

Breen #1371, 1792 cent, same dies, copper, no silver plug, Crosby plate 10, #22, Judd 2, figure 16 in Smithsonian Bulletin 229, 1970 (V. Clain Stefanelli, History of the National Numismatic Collection), Garrett 2448 whose weight is given as 63.1 grains = 4.09 grams.

So the answer to my question with regard to previously reported specimens is that the existence of two different plug-less small 1792 cents was indeed recognized by Breen and he listed all three varieties mentioned by Jefferson. Judd 2 (in my sixth edition copy) purposely included both plug-less varieties, with the notation that one of the known pieces might be billon. My latest Red Book (2001) lists only with- and without-silver center varieties.

That leaves the new Pittsburgh piece. Is it billon, made by fusing silver and copper, or was it struck on a regular copper planchet? The weight differences noted above are in the right direction, but the sample weighed is so small that weight would be as dangerous a sole criterion as color for distinguishing Breen 1370 and 1371.

Peter Gaspar (E-Sylum sheepish subscriber #1)

At 09:05 PM 9/1/04 -0400, you wrote:

Thanks for the great submission. Always good to hear from you. -Wayne.

Peter Gaspar wrote:

> Wayne:

> Alan V. Weinberg's report on the newly reported specimen of a plug-less
 > 1792 silver center cent was extremely interesting. I wonder whether any of
 > the known specimens has been subjected to a form of nondestructive analysis
 > (e.g. electron microprobe or x-ray fluorescence) capable of determining how
 > much silver is present. Eric Newman told me about a December 18, 1792
 > letter from Jefferson to Washington conveying two silver-center cents and
 > stating that Mr. Rittenhouse was about to make a few pieces from metal in
 > which the silver plug was fused with the copper. But the Jefferson letter
 > also stated that cents of the same size as the silver-center pieces would
 > be made of copper alone. Cents would also be made four times as large, as
 > ordered by Congress.

- > The Jefferson letter raises the possibility that there are, or at least
- > were, two different small plug-less cents, one containing as much silver as
- > the plug, and the other without intentionally added silver. (There may
- > still be a small silver impurity in the copper of those unalloyed small
- > copper cents.) Is it known whether the extant plug-less cents contain the
- > plugs-worth of silver? Or is it assumed that they do?
- > Peter Gaspar (E-Sylum proud subscriber #1)

Subj: **birthday greetings and a bidder for the Kolbe Ford Books part II**
 Date: 05/25/2005 6:03:18 P.M. Central Daylight Time
 From: gaspar@wuchem.wustl.edu
 To: EricNumis@aol.com

Dear Eric,

Please accept my heartfelt best wishes on this, your 94th birthday! I tried 'phoning several times today, and assume you are away, or that you have turned off your answering machine. Since the whole world is probably trying to reach you, that makes sense.

You mentioned that you could use a reliable bidder for the Ford Book Sale - part II. I suggest Charles Davis, if he is making the trip across the country. Charles thinks the world of you, and he is as honest as the days are long this time of year. I was interested in ten lots of Numismatic Chronicles in his last sale. By telling me that there were preemptive bids on the first seven, he let me concentrate on the last three, for which I gave him strong bids. He reduced each of them substantially and I got the three double volumes, to my surprise and pleasure. I now have NC from 1875 to the present (130 volumes) and lack "just" the first 34.

Happy Birthday!!

Peter